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What They're Saying – April 2009

"As the LTTE terrorists continue to put innocent civilians who seek safety from the conflict zone in harm's way, we urge the international community – and especially the United States – to put pressure on the leadership of the LTTE to immediately release the remaining civilians held captive in the conflict zone. "

H.E. Jaliya Wickramasuriya, Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Washington

THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA IS COMMITTED TO HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

UN News Centre: Statement from the Office of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, 20 Apr. 2009: The Secretary-General welcomes the escape by tens of thousands of civilians from the conflict zone in North and Eastern Sri Lanka over the last three days. He also condemned the attempts of the LTTE to prevent the civilians to leave the war zone. The statement said that in light of the latest outflow of displaced persons, the U.N. is increasing its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, and will continue to do all it can to ensure conditions fully reflect international standards.

United Nations: Temporary Civilian Camps Up to International Standards, 22 Apr. 2009: The LTTE has accused the government of putting people into "internment camps," but the United Nations has said the camps are up to international standards. The government of Sri Lanka says this is a temporary measure to weed out Tiger infiltrators, and pledges to begin resettling people by next month.

Amin Awad, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative in Sri Lanka, 20 Apr. 2009: "We continue to work with the government to increase the number of people who are leaving the camps; the elderly over 60, pregnant women, handicapped, people with special needs in general."

United Nations Security Council calls on the Tamil Tigers to surrender: Ambassador Claude Heller, 23 Apr. 2009: The LTTE must "immediately lay down arms, renounce terrorism, allow UN assistance to evacuate remaining civilians and start a political process through dialogue to put an end to the conflict," said Ambassador Claude Heller of Mexico, which holds the Security Council's rotating presidency.

Michael S. Owen, acting deputy assistant secretary for South & Central Asian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, 20 Apr. 2009: "I think this [in reference to the 35,000 civilians who fled the LTTE area earlier this week] is really especially significant, of course, because we've been hearing from the LTTE on many occasions when we stress the importance of allowing civilians to leave the safe zone. The LTTE has often responded by saying the civilians don't want to leave; they want to stay because they're afraid of what might happen to them once they leave. I think this clearly shows that that is not the case. Thirty-five thousand civilians voted with their feet and did obviously want to risk a lot in order to leave."

Robert Wood, Acting U.S. Department of State Spokesman, 21 Apr. 2009: "We have been engaged at very senior levels on this issue of the protection of civilians in the conflict zone. The Secretary [Clinton] is already thinking about how we go forward after this conflict is over and what we can do to help Sri Lanka rebuild and deal with the humanitarian situation. There have been communications with other interested parties and governments about what we [the United States] can do not only to protect civilians right now, but also in the aftermath of this conflict."

Los Angeles Times, Col. R. Hariharan, Retired Indian Military Officer, 21 Apr. 2009: "Militarily, [the Tamil fighters] appear to have lost their major artillery weapons, including 130mm [millimeter] guns and anti-aircraft weapons," wrote Col. R. Hariharan. "Thus the security forces have overwhelmed the LTTE, not only physically, but also psychologically."

Brigadier Lal Weerakoon, coordinating officer of the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services in Columbo, Apr. 21 2009: Sri Lanka government has taken measures to establish another 10 welfare centers in Vavuniya to provide the facilities for the fleeing civilians. Brigadier Lal Weerakoon said they hope to settle the new arrivals at those 10 welfare centers and they are expecting more civilians in the coming days as the government forces are continuing the rescue operation in Putumatalam area. The Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services has already provided sufficient essential food and other items including sanitary ware to meet the requirements of those newly fleeing civilians. Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday instructed the Commissioner General of Essential Services to ensure that enough food, medicines and other essentials are provided to the tens of thousands of people now arriving at the welfare centers. Sri Lanka government has already established 15 welfare centers in Vavuniy.

Sarah Crowe, UNICEF New Delhi-based Regional Spokeswomen, 21 Apr. 2009: After "the two-day easing of hostilities a week ago, we saw a trickle," said Sarah Crowe. "Now there seems to be a flood. Perhaps there's been a glimmer of hope for civilians that they would receive assistance at the other end."

UNICEF, "Sri Lanka: More children victims of the conflict, says UNICEF," 17 Feb. 2009: From 2003 to the end of 2008, UNICEF has recorded more than 6,000 cases of children recruited by the LTTE. "We have clear indications that the LTTE has intensified forcible recruitment of civilians and that children as young as 14 years old are now being targeted," said Philippe Duamelle, UNICEF's Representative in Sri Lanka. "These children are facing immediate danger and their lives are at great risk. Their recruitment is intolerable. Child soldiers suffer physical abuse, traumatic events and face death. Instead of hope, fear defines their childhood."

Human Rights Watch, "Trapped and Mistreated: LTTE Abuses against Civilians in the Vanni," Dec. 2008: The LTTE continues to systematically compel young men and women, including children, to join their forces, and have dramatically increased their forced recruitment practices.

UNICEF, "Sri Lanka: More children victims of the conflict, says UNICEF," 17 Feb. 2009: As part of a national programme to tackle the issue of child soldiers, the President of Sri Lanka and UNICEF [on Feb. 26, 2009] launched a national campaign to prevent child recruitment and promote the release of all recruited children. The campaign's call for an end to child recruitment goes hand-in-hand with the provision of reintegration and rehabilitation services for children who are released by armed groups.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa, 26 Feb. 2009: "The image of Sri Lanka, for far too long, has been stained by the presence of Child Soldiers in our country. But, more important than erasing the stain in our image, is the need to save our children from this special horror of terror, the most savage of the chosen weapons of terror, that has been the menace of our society for nearly three decades."

Bloomberg, "Sri Lanka Sends Food by Sea for Trapped Civilians," 18 Feb. 2009: Sri Lanka's government is sending food and medicine by sea to civilians sheltering on the northeastern coast to escape fighting between the army and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. "We have to find an alternative route to provide food for the internally displaced people since road transportation is impossible," S. Divaratna, the commissioner general for essential services, said late yesterday in Colombo, according to the Defense Ministry.

Bloomberg, "Sri Lankan Envoy Says Conflict Is Over Terrorism Not Ethnicity," 26 Feb. 2009: "We realize that once terrorism has ended, the only way forward is to bring all the parties together," said H.E. Jaliya Wickramasuriya, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the U.S.

THE LTTE IS A DANGEROUS TERRORIST ORGANIZATION THAT MUST BE STOPPED

Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Taming the Tamil Tigers," 10 Jan. 2008: The Tamil Tigers are among the most dangerous and deadly extremists in the world. For more than three decades, the group has launched a campaign of violence and bloodshed in Sri Lanka, the island republic off the southern coast of India...

As terrorist groups go, it has quite a résumé: Perfected the use of suicide bombers; Invented the suicide belt; Pioneered the use of women in suicide attacks; Murdered some 4,000 people in the past two years alone; and assassinated two world leaders—the only terrorist organization to do so.

Foreign Policy Research Institute, "How to Kill Civilians in the Name of "Human Rights": Lessons from Sri Lanka," Feb. 2009: To begin with, the LTTE, despite its claims and effective propaganda, does not represent the Tamils. It never submitted itself to elections; to the contrary, it is a quasi-cult terror group, subservient to the whims of one person, [Velupillai] Prabhakaran. His decisions, rather than any nationalist goal, send people to their death, train them for death, preferably from childhood, and have long murdered any moderate or nonviolent Tamil politician in the country.

Human Rights Watch, "Trapped and Mistreated: LTTE Abuses against Civilians in the Vanni," Dec. 2008: The LTTE, which has been fighting for an independent Tamil state—Tamil Eelam—has a deplorable human rights record. During the past 25 years it has committed innumerable murders of Sinhalese, Muslim, and Tamil civilians, political assassinations in Sri Lanka and abroad, and suicide bombings with high loss of life...Human Rights Watch research in Sri Lanka shows that the LTTE has brutally and systematically abused the Tamil population on whose behalf they claim to fight, and that the LTTE bears a heavy responsibility for the desperate plight of the civilians in the Vanni.

H.E. Mr. Yukio Takasu, Ambassador of Japan and President of the U.N. Security Council, 27 Feb. 2009: A strong focus should be on Tamil Tigers as they are not allowing civilians to go to safety, freely in Government controlled areas. There were reports that the LTTE has attacked and killed their own people trying to free themselves and go to government areas including a report about child suicide bombers being sent. They are also putting obstacles in the way of supplies and evacuations. **Tigers should lay down arms to bring this conflict to an end.**

U.S. Treasury, "Treasury Targets U.S. Front for Sri Lankan Terrorist Organization," 11 Feb. 2009: "The LTTE, like other terrorist groups, has relied on so-called charities to raise funds and advance its violent aims," said Adam J. Szubin, Director of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. "We will continue to aggressively target attempts by any terrorist group to hide behind charities, front companies, or name changes to propagate terror against innocents around the world."

United Nations Sri Lanka statement, 16 Feb. 2009: The LTTE continues to actively prevent people leaving, and reports indicate that a growing number of people trying to leave have been shot and sometimes killed. There are indications that children as young as 14 are being recruited into the ranks of the LTTE.

David Miliband, U.K. Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 24 Feb. 2009: No one denies that there is a terrorist problem in Sri Lanka. That terrorist problem poses a mortal threat to Sri Lankans in all communities..."

United Nations Sri Lanka Statement 16 Feb. 2009: The LTTE continues to actively prevent people leaving, and reports indicate that a growing number of people trying to leave have been shot and sometimes killed. There are indications that children as young as 14 are being recruited into the ranks of the LTTE.

H.E. Sir John Sawers., Ambassador of UK, 27 Feb. 2009: The LTTE is a terrorist organization proscribed by many countries including the UK. They are cornered and under pressure and the solution to the current situation is the LTTE laying down arms and allowing civilians to freely move and for political process begin.

CLAIMS MADE BY LTTE PROPAGANDISTS ARE FALSE

Foreign Policy Research Institute, "How to Kill Civilians in the Name of "Human Rights": Lessons from Sri Lanka," Feb. 2009: "[Human rights' groups have said] the LTTE's grim practices are being exploited by the government to justify its own atrocities... What are the government 'atrocities'? Temporary camps, with schools and clinics, for some two years for civilians formerly under Tiger control and indoctrination—and plausibly infiltrated by terrorist cadres."

United Nations News Centre, "Sri Lanka: UN official urges Government, rebels to end civilian deaths," 21 Feb. 2009: [UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes] welcomed the increasingly good cooperation between Government officials, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in providing urgent food, shelter and medical help.

Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence, "US Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Sri Lanka is a counterproductive exercise," 24 Feb. 2009: Sir John Holmes, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator who toured the civilian shelters on Saturday (21) said he was very satisfied with the way the government authorities are handling the humanitarian situation in Internally Displaced People (IDP) centers in Vavuniya.

H.E. Jaliya Wickramasuriya, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the United States, to the Washington Diplomat, March 2009: "Our main concern is getting the civilians out of there. If the international community pressures the LTTE to release the civilians from their clutches, this could be finished in two weeks. But since we're worried about civilians, it will take longer. Our president has given strict instructions to the armed forces not to injure even one civilian."

H.E. Mr. Yukio Takasu, Ambassador of Japan and President of the Security Council, 27 Feb. 2009: It was acknowledged that Government of Sri Lanka is taking a lot of precautions to minimize casualties. However, there are reports of great deal of suffering and casualties. It is well known that LTTE is firing from behind civilians and it is hoped that the Government will continue to exercise maximum restraint.

TIME, "The Tigers' Last Days," 19 Feb. 2009: The Sri Lankan government insists that its human-rights record is excellent compared with that of the Tigers. "In a war situation, you can't stop violating human rights in small ways," says Lakshman Hulugalle, a spokesman for the Sri Lankan Defense Ministry. "In Iraq, how many innocent people were killed?" Hulugalle says any concerns raised about the army's practices should also acknowledge the abuses of the LTTE and that there are many. Indeed there are. People from the Vanni say they left home not just to escape the fighting but also to get away from the forced recruitment of their children and from forced labor, which the Tigers used to build a massive, booby-trapped trench around parts of their stronghold in the jungle.

SRI LANKA: RESPONDING TO CRITICS

May 15, 2009

The LTTE terrorist organization and other groups have made false accusations against the government of Sri Lanka in an attempt to undermine their efforts to end the 26-year conflict.

CLAIM 1: Government forces commit indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on displaced persons in violation of the laws of war.

REALITY 1: Security forces are strictly instructed to avoid civilian casualties.¹ Ensuring the safety and security of those civilians who remain in the conflict area and respecting international humanitarian law is the foremost priority of the Government of Sri Lanka. In fact, the war has dragged on precisely because of military efforts to avoid civilian casualties. If the security forces had not shown any consideration for the trapped civilians, the war would have ended long ago. Security forces have been ordered not to use heavy guns, aerial weapons or combat aircraft in efforts to protect the trapped Tamil civilians.²

In reality, the LTTE is hiding behind the civilians they have trapped in the combat zone and forcibly holding them as human shields by shooting at them when they try to escape to government-established safe zones.³ To secure the safety of these trapped civilians, the army has breached several LTTE earthbunds allowing tens of thousands of civilians to escape to government safe zones. In fact, on May 14, another 5,000 civilians fled the LTTE.⁴ In total, more than 192,000 civilians have fled the conflict zone in northern Sri Lanka.⁵ Security forces and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are currently sending boats into the conflict area to evacuate civilians who manage to escape. Once to safety, the UN, ICRC, Sri Lankan security forces and numerous NGOs provide essential services to the displaced persons.

CLAIM 2: The situation is dire for those who escape to government-controlled territory. The Sri Lankan government will not let the displaced persons leave the camps and the government violates their fundamental rights.

REALITY 2: While the conditions on the ground are admittedly difficult, the government is comprehensively committed to ensuring the well being of the civilians who have been evacuated from the conflict area and will resettle all internally displaced persons (IDPs) as early as possible. The officers and the rank and file of the security forces are also educated in human rights as enshrined in the UN conventions and treaties and are carrying out their humanitarian efforts in accordance with international law.⁶

The ultimate objective of the government is to facilitate the safe and voluntary return of the displaced to their villages of origin by removing obstacles to return. One of the major obstacles is the removal of thousands of landmines and booby traps that the LTTE placed around villages in the northern part of the country. The government will be looking to the international community for assistance and support to complete the demining process and will rebuild the north by using a plan that worked well in the Eastern Province. The government is committed to resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction work in the Northern Province. The plan is called the “Four Ds” which stands for demining, demilitarization, democracy and development.⁷ This ambitious plan includes repairing roads, bridge and rail lines, water and sanitation facilities and thousands of homes.

The first stage of resettlement of tens of thousands of IDPs has already begun.⁸ A group of 400 civilians were resettled in the Musali village of Mannar district, 320 kilometers north of Colombo in late April.⁹ The area where the resettlement took place was once held by the LTTE but was cleared of the rebels by security forces more than a year ago.¹⁰

CLAIM 3: Government-provided shelter looks more like prison camps than camps for internally displaced persons (i.e. lack of food and water, surrounded by coils of barbed wire, sandbags and machine-gun nests).

REALITY 3: The UN has confirmed the camps meet international standards.¹¹ While facilities were overwhelmed in the first few days, coordinated efforts between the government and aid agencies have improved conditions to meet or exceed internationally accepted norms. The government has received tents from UN Agencies, UNHCR, UNICEF and NGOs to provide shelter for the IDPs.¹² Food, safe drinking water and basic health needs are being provided.¹³ Mosquito nets, clothing, hygiene kits and kitchen sets are among the many items being distributed.¹⁴ Steps are being taken to provide education for the displaced children, while more aid is arriving daily to meet increased demands.¹⁵ The government, with the help of numerous aid agencies, is protecting and caring for the IDPs and will help restore their livelihoods once the conflict is over.¹⁶ A government program is also underway to reunite families separated during their flight from the LTTE.¹⁷ In fact, the combatants who have surrendered will be rehabilitated and trained in vocations.¹⁸

Additionally, in anticipation of more civilians arriving at the camps, the government is continuously providing more land and additional shelter, including public housing, to accommodate new arrivals in Vavuniya, Mannar, Trincomalee and Jaffna.¹⁹ The

government is also undergoing efforts to protect civilians by weeding out LTTE infiltrators and suicide bombers in the camps.²⁰

CLAIM 4: The government is running a campaign to shield this conflict from independent scrutiny (i.e. international media and other observers have been barred from getting anywhere near the conflict area).

REALITY 4: The 1.5 square mile combat area is simply too dangerous to grant direct access to media and other observers to live and work in at this time. However, this does not mean that journalists do not have ample access to information coming from within the conflict zone. Satellite imagery and reliable and independent sources on the ground help provide these groups with up-to-the-minute and accurate information to help them report breaking news or assess needed humanitarian relief for the civilians fleeing the conflict zone.²¹ Additionally, dozens of journalists and leading global news outlets have been taken into the cleared portion of the no-fire zone and have viewed the government camps.²² Since January, 154 reporters have visited the northern conflict areas and government camps, including 26 reporters who visited the northern no-fire zone on April 24.²³ The government is in the process of assessing the ground situation and is working toward providing enhanced access in the future. Currently, there is a significant concern that the terrorists will kidnap aid workers and use them as human shields.

CLAIM 5: The Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt was denied a visa to enter Sri Lanka.

REALITY 5: There was no refusal.²⁴ Foreign Minister Bildt has been invited to visit Sri Lanka.²⁵ Sri Lanka has many visits by ministers and the Government simply cannot accommodate all of them at the same time.²⁶ Additionally, FM Bildt's trip was unscheduled while his British and French counterparts were part of a previously planned visit. Colombo welcomes FM Bildt to visit the country at a mutually convenient time.

CLAIM 6: The lack of access to internally displaced persons (IDPs) is alarming, especially in light of Sri Lanka's record of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions.

REALITY 6: The UN and more than 50 NGOs enjoy full access to the IDPs in the government-run camps and are working round-the-clock to provide essential items and

medical assistance to these civilians.²⁷ In addition, IDPs enjoy telephone, telegram and mail service among the various camps.²⁸ UNHCR has confirmed that these civilians engage in short visits by friends and relatives.²⁹ The government is also quickly facilitating other initiatives such as separation of ex-combatants from the civilian population and expediting the screening process in the camps to allow greater freedom of movement.³⁰

CLAIM 7: The government is not serious about a long-term political solution to the conflict.

REALITY 7: The government is committed to a lasting political solution and ensuring a secure and lasting peace. Such a solution will include representation from Tamils and other minority groups. The government has already recruited Tamil leaders to help the Tamil population integrate into the general society. In addition to the Tamil ministers currently in the Sri Lankan cabinet,³¹ the government on March 9, 2009, appointed a former deputy leader of the LTTE as Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation.³²

One way to measure the government's commitment to reconciliation is to look at what it did in an area formerly controlled by the LTTE. The Army took back the Eastern Province from the LTTE two years ago. Elections were held there in May 2008 and were monitored by People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL). A former LTTE child soldier and Tamil leader was sworn in as the Chief Minister of the Eastern Province following the elections.

CLAIM 8: The plight of the civilians trapped in the conflict area has been exacerbated by a shortage of food and medical supplies.

REALITY 8: The government sends essential items such as food and medicine into the conflict area to help those still trapped by the LTTE. The government and the ICRC have delivered nearly 2,500 metric tons of food and medical aid to the no-fire zone.³³ This includes 25 metric tons of food delivered on May 7.³⁴ Shipments continue despite the difficult conditions. Progress has also been made as a result of the Army breaching LTTE earthbunds. More than 192,000 civilians have fled the conflict zone in northern Sri Lanka.³⁵ The government and other aid agencies continue to provide essential services to the IDPs once they reach government safe havens. (See REALITY 3 for more details.)

- ¹ Government of Sri Lanka, <http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=2009042411>, (last visited May 6, 2009).
- ² *Id.*
- ³ *LTTE shooting fleeing civilians*, Mawbima Lanka News, (April 10, 2009).
- ⁴ Government of Sri Lanka, <http://www.defence.lk/english.asp>, (last visited May 14, 2009).
- ⁵ *50,000 still trapped in conflict zone in Lanka*, Press Trust of India, (May 7, 2009).
- ⁶ Government of Sri Lanka, <http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=2009042411>, (last visited May 6, 2009).
- ⁷ Wickramasuriya, Jaliya. "Ambassador Jaliya Wickramasuriya Remarks at the Atlantic Council." Atlantic Council of the United States. Washington, D.C. May 6, 2009, available at <http://www.slembassyusa.org/>, (last visited May 12, 2009).
- ⁸ Resettlement of war refugees begins in northern Sri Lanka, (April 30, 2009), available at http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/southasia/news/article_1474237.php.
- ⁹ *Id.*
- ¹⁰ *Id.*
- ¹¹ Q+A: Plight of civilians at the end of Sri Lanka's war, (April 24, 2009), available at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/homepageCrisis/idUKCOL474568.CH.2420>, (last visited May 8, 2009).
- ¹² Government of Sri Lanka, <http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=2009042411>, (last visited May 6, 2009).
- ¹³ Sri Lanka government hopes to resettle IDPs quickly, (April 24, 2009), http://www.colombopage.com/archive_09/April24141225RA.html.
- ¹⁴ Emergency response stepped up in Sri Lanka; new displacement at 63,000, (April 17, 2009), available at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/JBRN-7R7E5V?OpenDocument>.
- ¹⁵ Sri Lanka government hopes to resettle IDPs quickly, (April 24, 2009), http://www.colombopage.com/archive_09/April24141225RA.html.
- ¹⁶ *Id.*
- ¹⁷ Govt reunites IDP families, (May 3, 2009), available at <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2009/05/03/new01.asp>.
- ¹⁸ *Id.*
- ¹⁹ First UNHCR emergency airlift flight for Sri Lanka arrives in Colombo, (April 27, 2009), <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/media?page=home&id=49f59f9a2>.
- ²⁰ Sri Lanka gives Tigers ultimatum as thousands flee, (April 20, 2009), available at <http://www.nationalpost.com/most-popular/story.html?id=1515549>.
- ²¹ Sri Lanka: The Pros And Cons Of International Attention, (April 24, 2009), available at <http://www.alertnet.org/db/blogs/29542/4145231a8fd264697ec83f2a80f989da.htm>.
- ²² Kohona, Dr.Palitha (Sri Lankan Secretary of Foreign Affairs). Interview. April 29, 2009, (on file with author).
- ²³ Report compiled by the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Washington, D.C., (May 14, 2009), (on file with author).
- ²⁴ Swedish foreign minister denied entry to Sri Lanka, (April 28, 2007), available at http://townhall.com/news/world/2009/04/28/swedish_foreign_minister_denied_entry_to_sri_lanka.
- ²⁵ *Id.*
- ²⁶ *Id.*
- ²⁷ Press Release, Embassy of Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan Ambassador responds to President Obama's Comments on the Conflict in Sri Lanka, (May 14, 2009), (on file with author).
- ²⁸ Press Release, UN News Centre, Sri Lanka: UN refugee agency calls for broader protection of displaced persons, (April 17, 2009), (on file with author).
- ²⁹ *Id.*
- ³⁰ Sri Lanka gives Tigers ultimatum as thousands flee, (April 20, 2009), available at <http://www.nationalpost.com/most-popular/story.html?id=1515549>.
- ³¹ Government of Sri Lanka, http://www.priu.gov.lk/Govt_Ministers/Indexministers.html (last visited March 20, 2009).
- ³² Press Release, Ministry of defense of Sri Lanka, Karuna joins Govt; Leads Over 2000 Tamils from East to SLFP, (March 12, 2009) (on file with author).
- ³³ SRI LANKA: ICRC to distribute Indian aid to Vanni IDPs, (November 18, 2008), available at <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81525>.
- ³⁴ Sri Lanka: Vanni Emergency OCHA Situation Report No. 8, (May 7, 2009), available at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MWAI-7RU3G7?OpenDocument>.
- ³⁵ *50,000 still trapped in conflict zone in Lanka*, Press Trust of India, (May 7, 2009).

Excerpts from Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's Address to Parliament At the Conclusion of the 26-Year Conflict with LTTE

May 19, 2009

- We have been victorious in the battle to defeat terrorism. Our security forces were able to defeat the most ruthless terrorists in the world.
- The war against the LTTE was not a war against Tamil people. Our aim was to liberate our Tamil people from the clutches of the LTTE.
- A Presidential Task Force has already been appointed to expedite development work in the Vanni and the North. We are committed to carry out accelerated development in the areas that were under terrorism.
- The government will provide infrastructure such as irrigation, highways, electricity and such facilities necessary for the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors. The government will also provide education and health facilities.
- It is necessary that we find a [political] solution that is our very own, of our own nation. It cannot be an imported solution. The aim [is to] raise the lives of the Tamil people who live in the North and East of our land.
- All the people of this country should live in safety. All should live with equal rights. That is my aim. Let us all get together and build up this nation.
- No longer are the Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any others minorities. We should live in this country as children of one mother. No differences of race, caste and religion should prevail here.
- Our heroic forces have sacrificed their lives to protect Tamil civilians. We remember all these heroic troops with respect. We show them our gratitude.
- The Sri Lankan nation will always remember the help given to our country by many countries. We will not forget that such assistance was given on behalf of world democracy. Ending terrorism in Sri Lanka means a victory for democracy in the world.

*This material is distributed by CJRW on behalf of the Embassy of Sri Lanka.
Additional information is available at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.*

SRI LANKA: POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION PLAN

May 22, 2009

After a long 26-year conflict, Sri Lanka has finally defeated terrorism and is now officially in the post-LTTE era. The government is currently addressing the unprecedented humanitarian mission in the Northern Province and is moving forward with rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts under a plan called the 'Four Ds' – demining, demilitarization, democracy and development.

Humanitarian Mission

Currently, more than 50 non-governmental organizations are working to assist the government in providing humanitarian assistance and medical care¹ to the more than 250,000 internally displaced persons now under the care of the government.² While facilities were overwhelmed in the first few days of the conflict, the United Nations confirms that coordinated efforts between the government and aid agencies have improved conditions to meet or exceed internationally accepted norms.³

The government has received tents from the UN, UNHCR, UNICEF and other aid groups and is providing shelter to the displaced civilians.⁴ Food, safe drinking water and basic health needs are being provided.⁵ Mosquito nets, clothing, hygiene kits and kitchen sets are among the many items being distributed.⁶ Civilians enjoy telephone, telegram and mail service among the various camps.⁷

The government is not only protecting and caring for these civilians, but is helping to restore their livelihoods now that the conflict is over. Education is provided for children⁸ and vocational training is also available.⁹ Families separated during their flight from the LTTE are being reunited.¹⁰ The government is reintegrating all members of the community, including combatants who participated in pro-LTTE activities. Ex-combatants are being trained in vocations. The government is also quickly facilitating other initiatives, such as expediting the screening process in the camps to allow greater freedom of movement.¹¹

Demining and Demilitarization

The LTTE placed thousands of landmines and booby traps around villages in the north. The government plans to systematically remove these hazards to make it safe for civilians to return to those areas. India and the United States have pledged aid for demining. Recently, more than 1,000 mines were removed from an area near Jaffa by Britain's Halo Trust and the Humpty Dumpty Institute. The government has already recovered most of the LTTE armory and will continue to clear the country of the

weapons and equipment used by the LTTE. The mission in the post LTTE-era is to create a safe and secure Sri Lanka, free of the instruments of war.

Democracy

Sri Lanka is the oldest democracy in Asia and the nation is moving towards an even stronger and more inclusive democracy. The government is committed to a lasting political solution that will include representation from Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Malays – and all Sri Lankans. The political solution will be one that is formulated by Sri Lankans, not by outside nations. However, the government will seek cooperation for its political solution from the international community.

The government will establish local and provincial governments of Tamil citizens similar to what was already accomplished in the Eastern Province. In addition to the Tamil ministers currently in the Sri Lankan cabinet, the government on March 9 appointed a former deputy leader of the LTTE as Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation.¹² Also, a former LTTE child soldier was sworn in as the Chief Minister of the Eastern Province following the elections there in May 2008. These elections were monitored by People's Action for Free and Fair Elections.

Development

Vast reconstruction efforts, targeted economic development and the resettlement of displaced citizens are all underway. Investment will come with peace, and Sri Lanka is preparing its economic infrastructure to meet the challenges of new partnerships and new opportunities. The ambitious plan includes the reconstruction of 80,000 homes, roads, bridges, rail lines and water and sanitation facilities.¹³ The water supply and sanitation plants in the northern city of Jaffa will get immediate attention.¹⁴ The reconstruction of large factories, such as a cement factory and a chemical plant will also take place.¹⁵ The government will provide education and health facilities. Such economic development is vital for the expansion of many sectors of the economy, including agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

The first stage of resettlement of tens of thousands of the displaced citizens has begun. A group of 400 civilians were resettled in the Musali village of Mannar district in late April.¹⁶ The area where the resettlement took place was once held by the LTTE but was cleared of the rebels by security forces more than a year ago. The government will continue to seek the support of the international community to help implement the resettlement programs that have already begun.

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- ¹ Press Release, Embassy of Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan Ambassador responds to President Obama's Comments on the Conflict in Sri Lanka, (May 14, 2009), (on file with author).
- ² UN Chief Likely to Visit Sri Lanka to Help 250,000 Civilians and Promote the Political Solution, (May 28, 2009), available at <http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sns-ap-un-un-sri-lanka,0,2021741.story>.
- ³ Q+A: Plight of civilians at the end of Sri Lanka's war, (April 24, 2009), available at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/homepageCrisis/idUKCOL474568.CH.2420>, (last visited May 8, 2009).
- ⁴ Government of Sri Lanka, <http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20090424.11>, (last visited May 6, 2009).
- ⁵ Sri Lanka government hopes to resettle IDPs quickly, (April 24, 2009), http://www.colombopage.com/archive_09/April24141225RA.html.
- ⁶ Emergency response stepped up in Sri Lanka; new displacement at 63,000, (April 17, 2009), available at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/JBRN-7R7E5V?OpenDocument>.
- ⁷ Press Release, UN News Centre, Sri Lanka: UN refugee agency calls for broader protection of displaced persons, (April 17, 2009), (on file with author).
- ⁸ Sri Lanka government hopes to resettle IDPs quickly, (April 24, 2009), http://www.colombopage.com/archive_09/April24141225RA.html.
- ⁹ Govt reunites IDP families, (May 3, 2009), available at <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2009/05/03/new01.asp>.
- ¹⁰ *Id.*
- ¹¹ Sri Lanka gives Tigers ultimatum as thousands flee, (April 20, 2009), available at <http://www.nationalpost.com/most-popular/story.html?id=1515549>.
- ¹² Press Release, Ministry of defense of Sri Lanka, Karuna joins Govt; Leads Over 2000 Tamils from East to SLFP (March 12, 2009) (on file with author).
- ¹³ Press Release, U.S. Officials Congratulate Sri Lanka on Victory Over LTTE, (May 20, 2009), (on file with author).
- ¹⁴ Wickramasuriya, Jaliya. "Ambassador Jaliya Wickramasuriya Remarks at the Atlantic Council." Atlantic Council of the United States. Washington, D.C. May 6, 2009, available at <http://www.slembassyusa.org/>, (last visited May 12, 2009).
- ¹⁵ *Id.*
- ¹⁶ Resettlement of war refugees begins in northern Sri Lanka, (April 30, 2009), available at http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/southasia/news/article_1474237.php.

What They're Saying – May 2009

To a people battered and bruised by terrorism for more than three decades, its convincing defeat is a genuine cause for celebration, that we see take place with spontaneity throughout our land. At a time when we seek to embrace all of our people as members of a single nation, the celebration of this victory, as deep as it is felt, should be expressed with magnanimity and friendship towards all.

– H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka, May 21, 2009

POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION, REHABILITATION AND RECONCILIATION

United Nations, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, May 19, 2009: I will offer to the Government and people of Sri Lanka the partnership of the United Nations to address the huge challenges of early recovery, resettlement and rehabilitation of populations internally displaced by the conflict. I will also extend United Nations support in establishing the basic building blocks for peace through an inclusive political process.

U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake, May 20, 2009: For the country, this is a new beginning. Now begins the critical process of national reconciliation. Although the wounds of a 26-year old conflict would take time to heal, I am convinced that there is a national desire among Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and others to make this national reconciliation happen to build a united and prosperous Sri Lanka. To achieve the promise of this new beginning and to assure a lasting end to terrorism, bold actions are needed now to share power to assure all Sri Lankan communities a future of hope, respect and dignity. Through such bold actions, a truly united Sri Lanka can emerge.

Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and National Security Advisor M.K. Narayan, Joint Statement, May 21, 2009: The Government of Sri Lanka indicated that it was their intention to dismantle the relief camps at the earliest and outlined a 180-day plan to resettle the bulk of (refugees) to their original places of habitation. The government of Sri Lanka also intends to begin a broader dialogue with all parties including Tamil parties in the new circumstances, for further enhancement of political arrangements to bring about lasting peace and reconciliation.

U.S. State Department, Ian Kelly, State Department Spokesman, May 19, 2009: To truly defeat terrorism, the Government of Sri Lanka needs to begin to heal the wounds of the conflict and work toward building a democratic, prosperous, tolerant and united Sri Lanka and work toward justice and reconciliation for both sides. A lasting peace in Sri Lanka depends on Sinhalese, Tamils and all other Sri Lankans working together to achieve new power sharing arrangements that safeguards and promote the rights of all Sri Lankans.

H.E. Jaliya Wickramasuriya, Ambassador for Sri Lanka, Washington, May 21, 2009: The government has an ambitious plan to redevelop Northern Sri Lanka, where the LTTE was present. The program includes reconciliation with Tamil civilians, as well as the reconstruction of long-neglected roads and bridges, railway lines, water and sanitation facilities and at least 80,000 homes. Local elections are also planned.

British MP Malcolm Bruce, Chairman of the Commons Overseas Development Committee, May 9, 2009: Back from a two-day visit and the first international group to have reached the war-torn area near Vavuniya, Mr. Bruce said, "Horror stories about conditions in Sri Lanka's camps housing hundreds of thousands of Tamil refugees are wrong. There may be shortages, but refugees we spoke to were happy to have escaped the fighting in the north of the island state. Many of the people we spoke to said they had not been able to leave the conflict zone because the rebels warned them that if they attempted to escape they would be shot and sentries were posted to prevent escape."

*This material is distributed by CJRW on behalf of the Embassy of Sri Lanka.
Additional information is available at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.*

MAP OF SRI LANKA



FACTS ON SRI LANKA:

Total Area:

65,610 km²
25,332 sq. mi.

Political Capital:

Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte

Commercial Capital:

Colombo

Population¹:

21,324,791

Age Structure:

0-14 years: 23.9%
(M 2,594,815/F 2,493,002)
15-64 years: 68%
(M 7,089,307/F 7,418,123)
65 + years: 8.1%
(M 803,172/F 926,327)

Ethnic Groups²:

Sinhalese 73.8%
Sri Lankan Moors 7.2%
Indian Tamil 4.6%
Sri Lankan Tamil 3.9%
Other 0.5%
Unspecified 10%

Religions³:

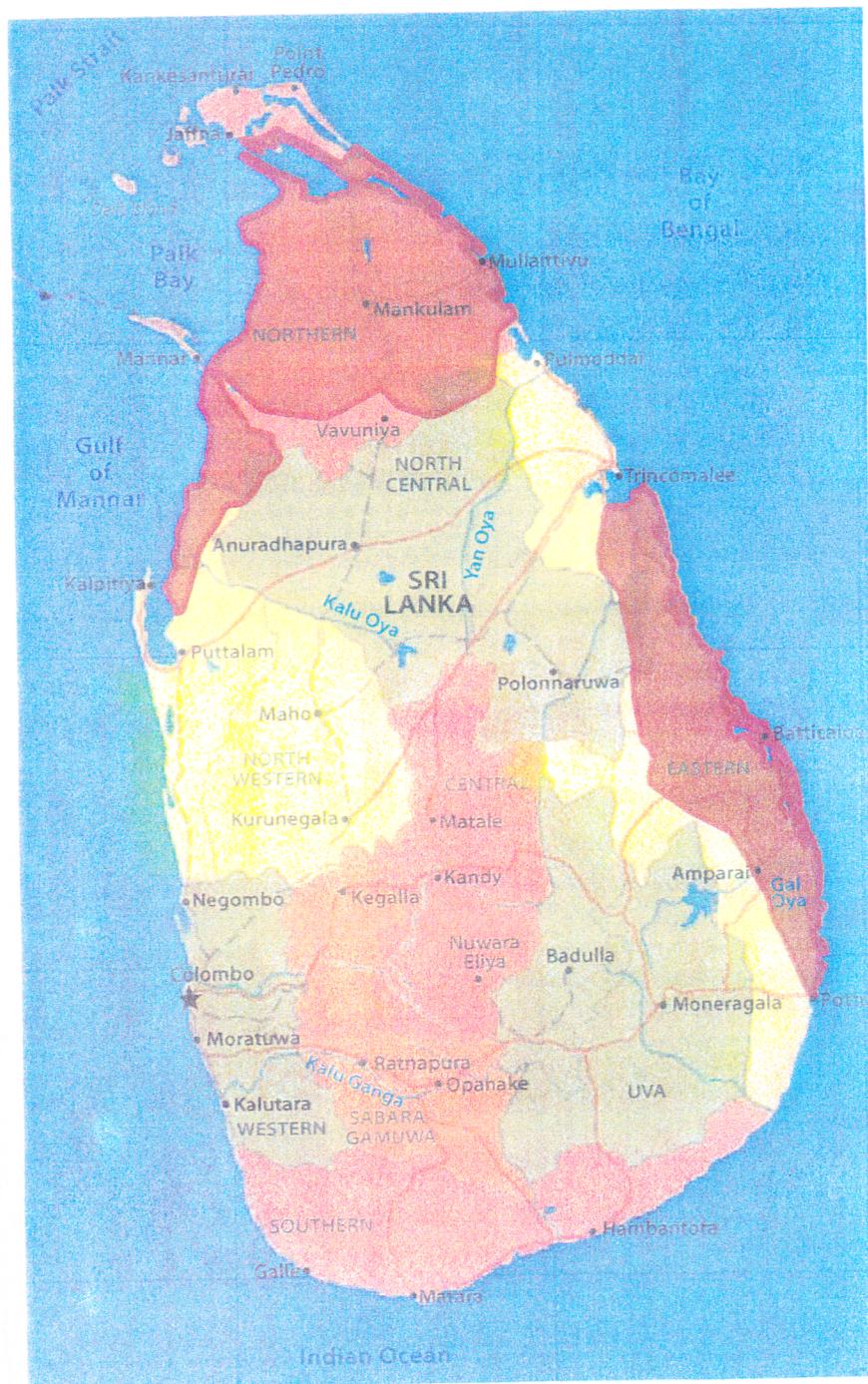
Buddhist 69.1%
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¹ July 2009 estimate

² 2001 census provisional data

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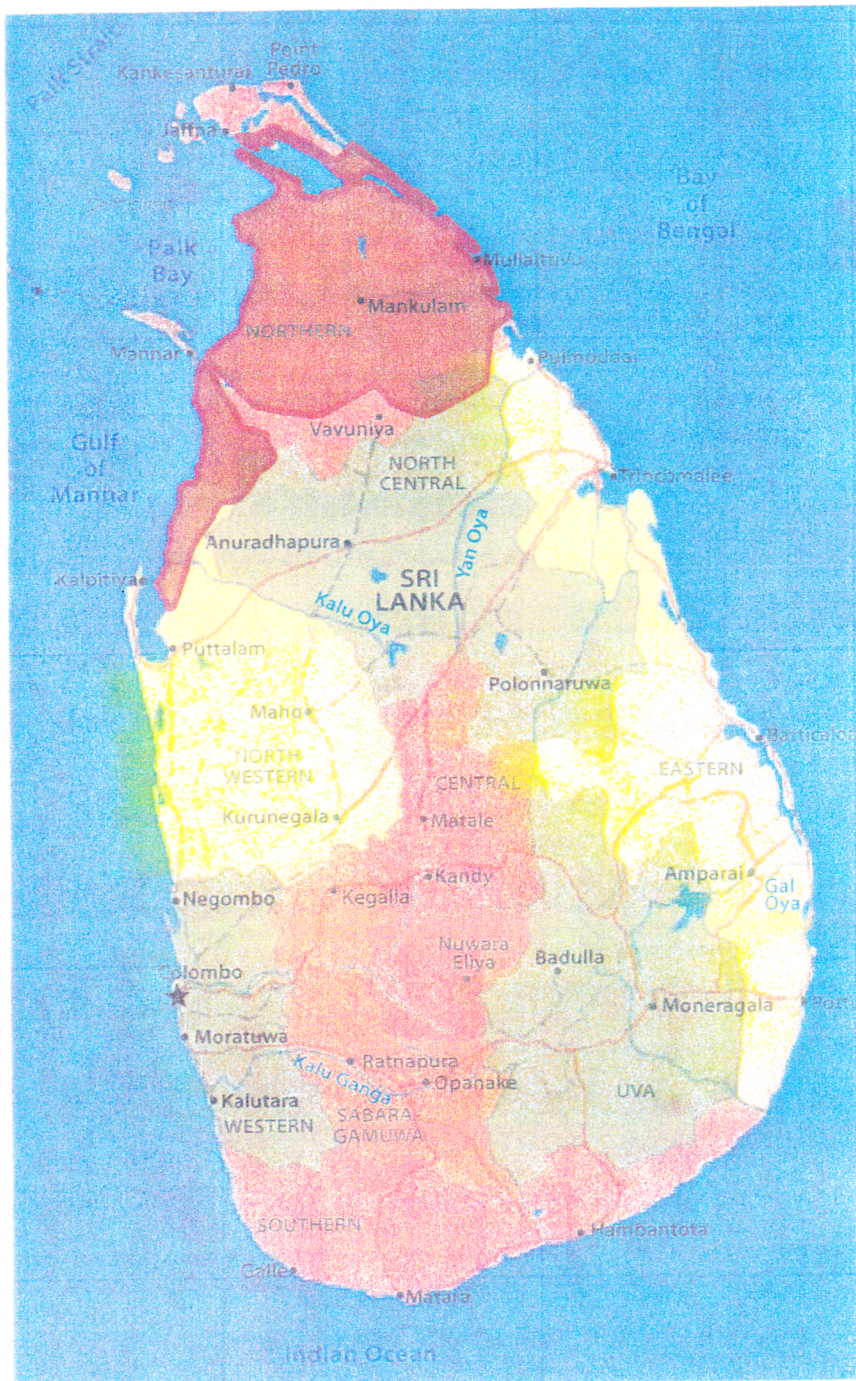
LTTE-HELD TERRITORY IN 2005



Territory controlled by LTTE in 2005, prior to commencement of Sri Lankan humanitarian operation.

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LTTE-HELD TERRITORY, JULY, 2007



Territory controlled by LTTE after the liberation of the Eastern Province by the Sri Lankan military in July 2007.

NORTHERN PROVINCE

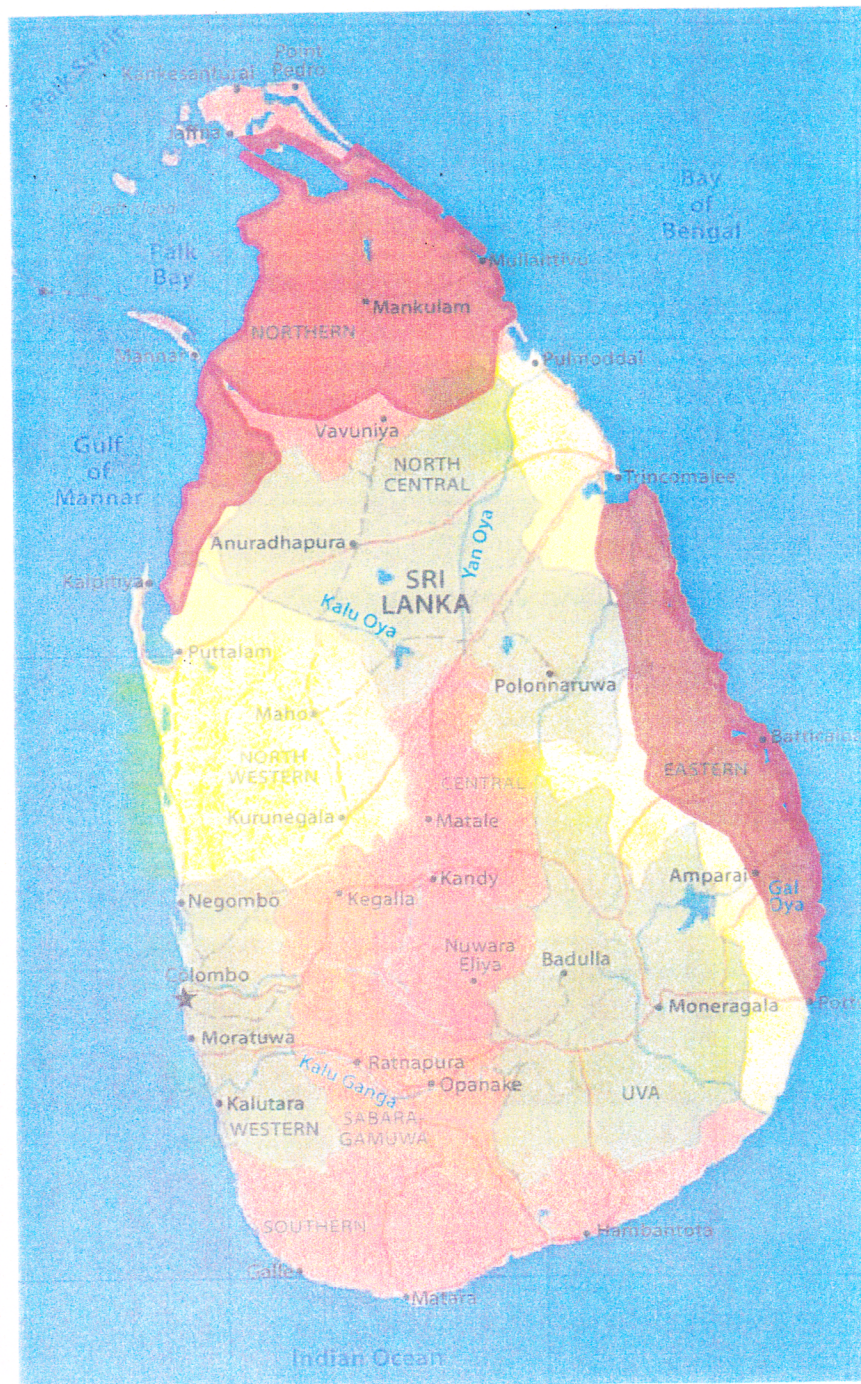


Current conflict area,
contained within the
Northern Province.

NORTHERN PROVINCE, CURRENT CONFLICT AREA

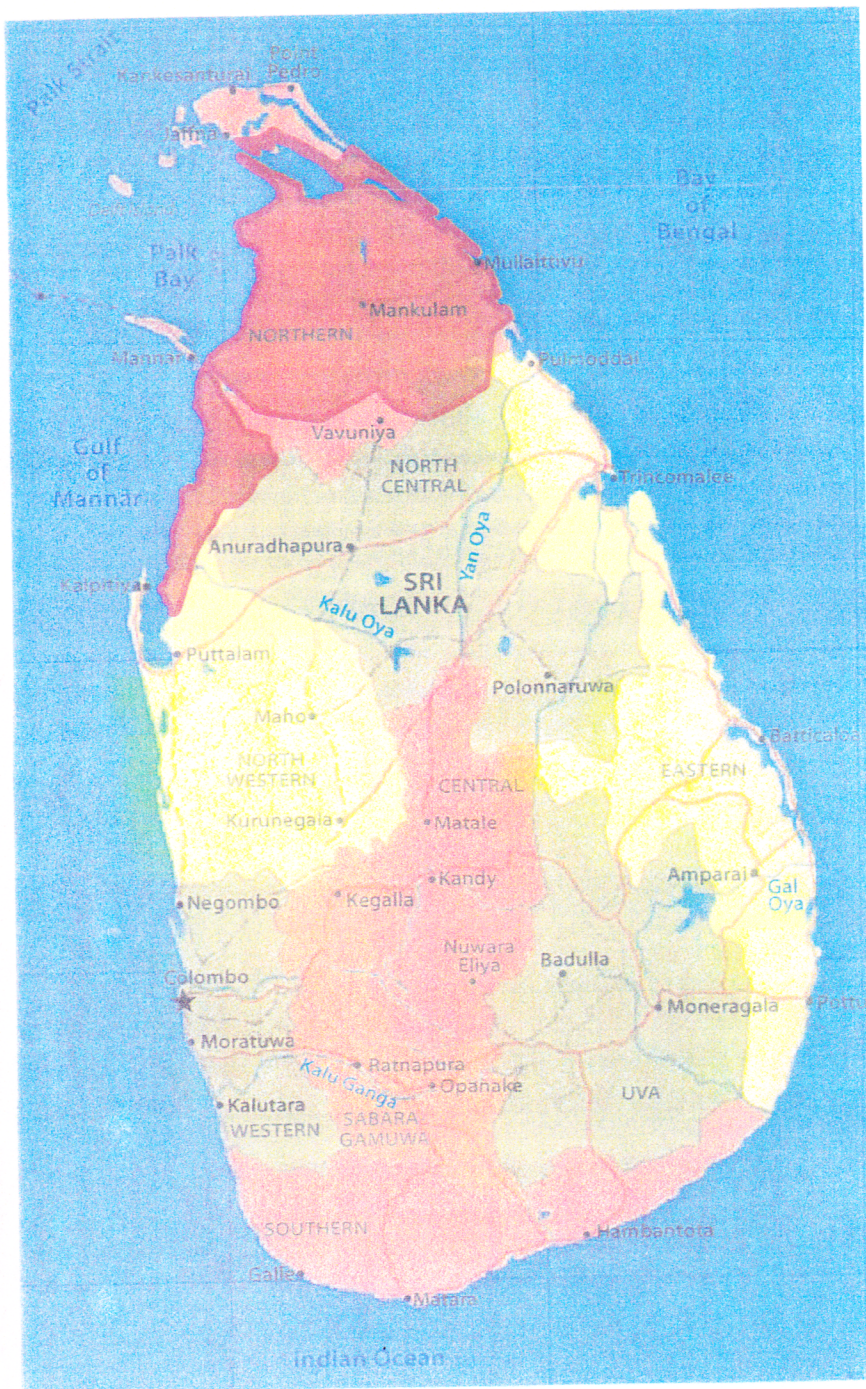


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NORTHERN PROVINCE



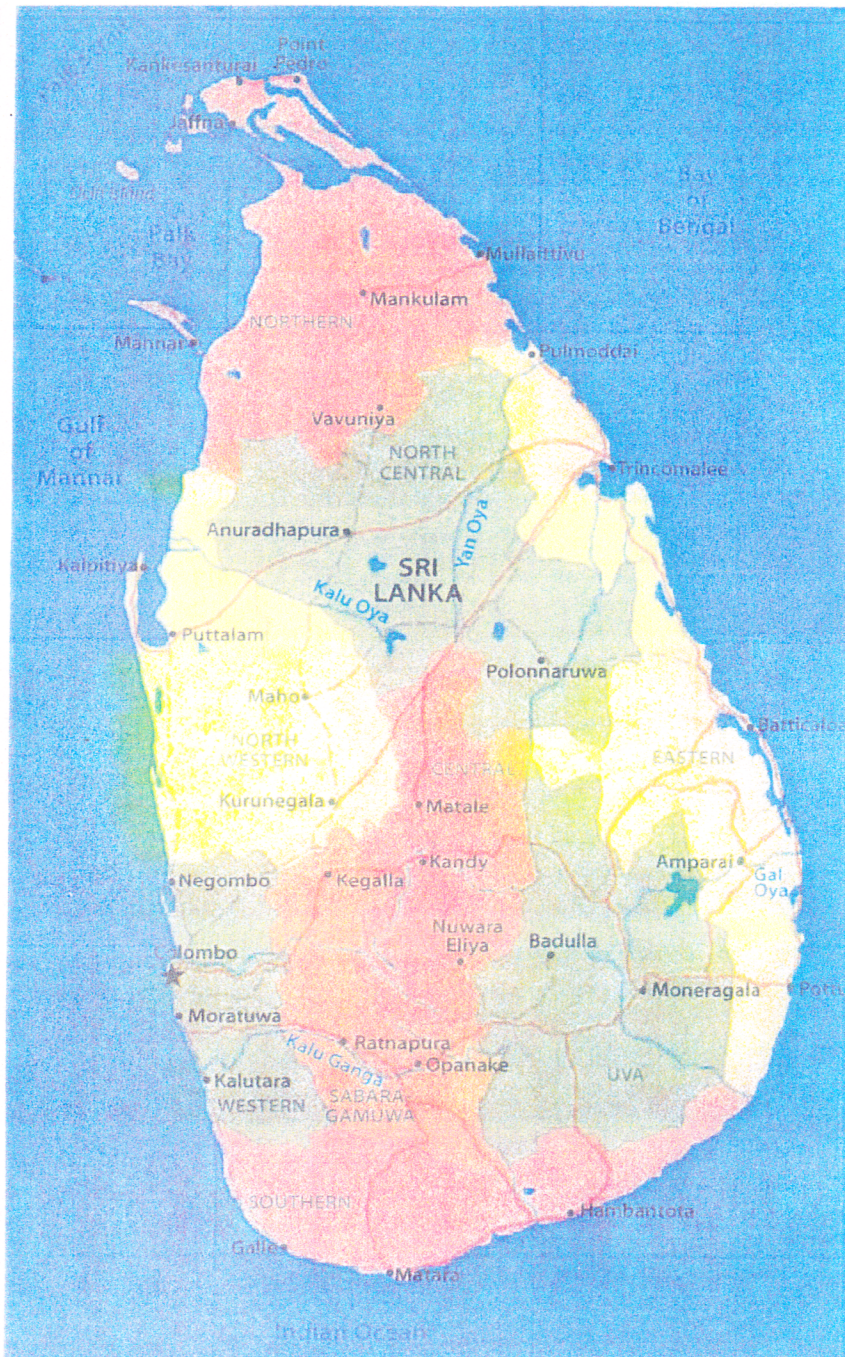
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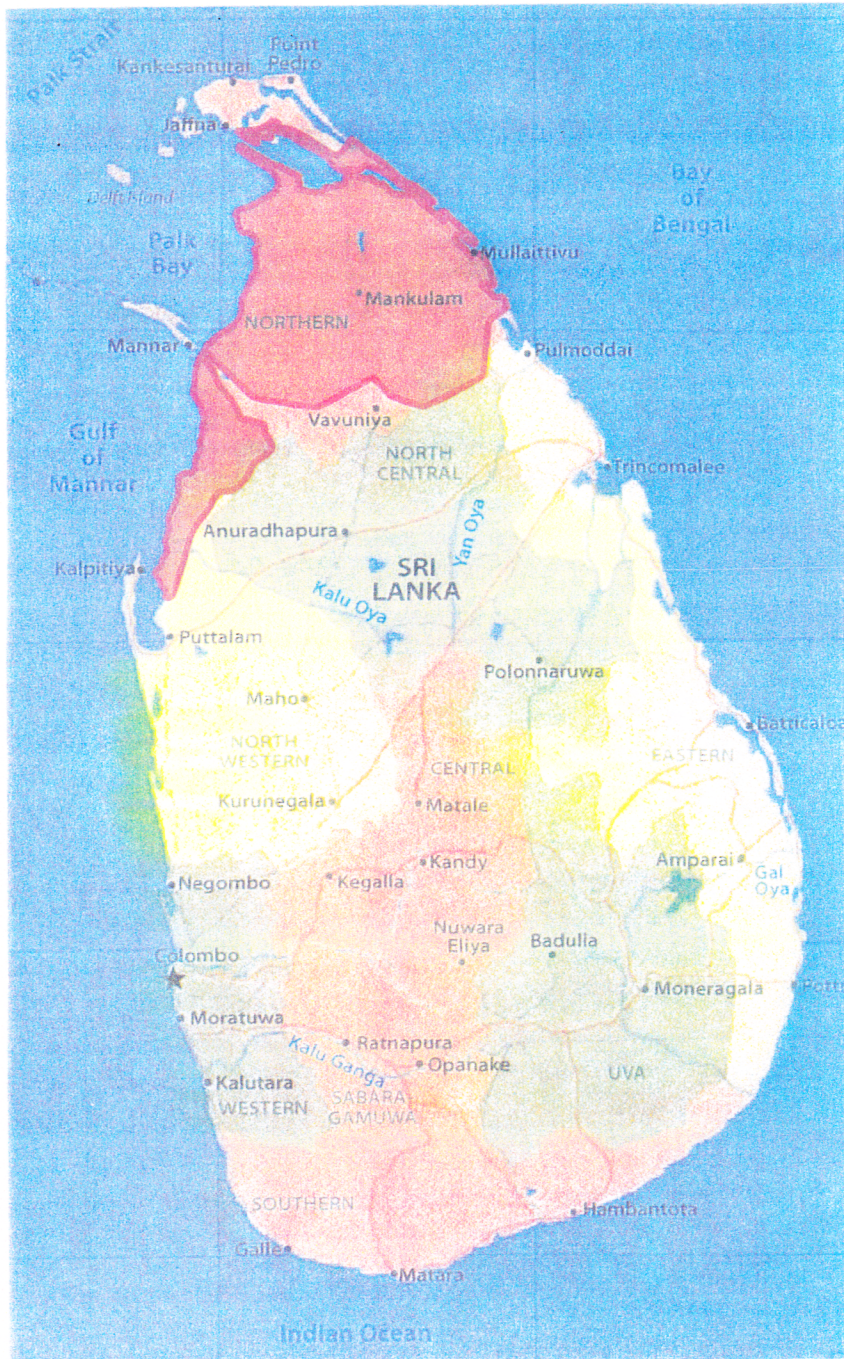
³ 2001 census provisional data

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NORTHERN PROVINCE

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Current conflict are contained within the Northern Province.



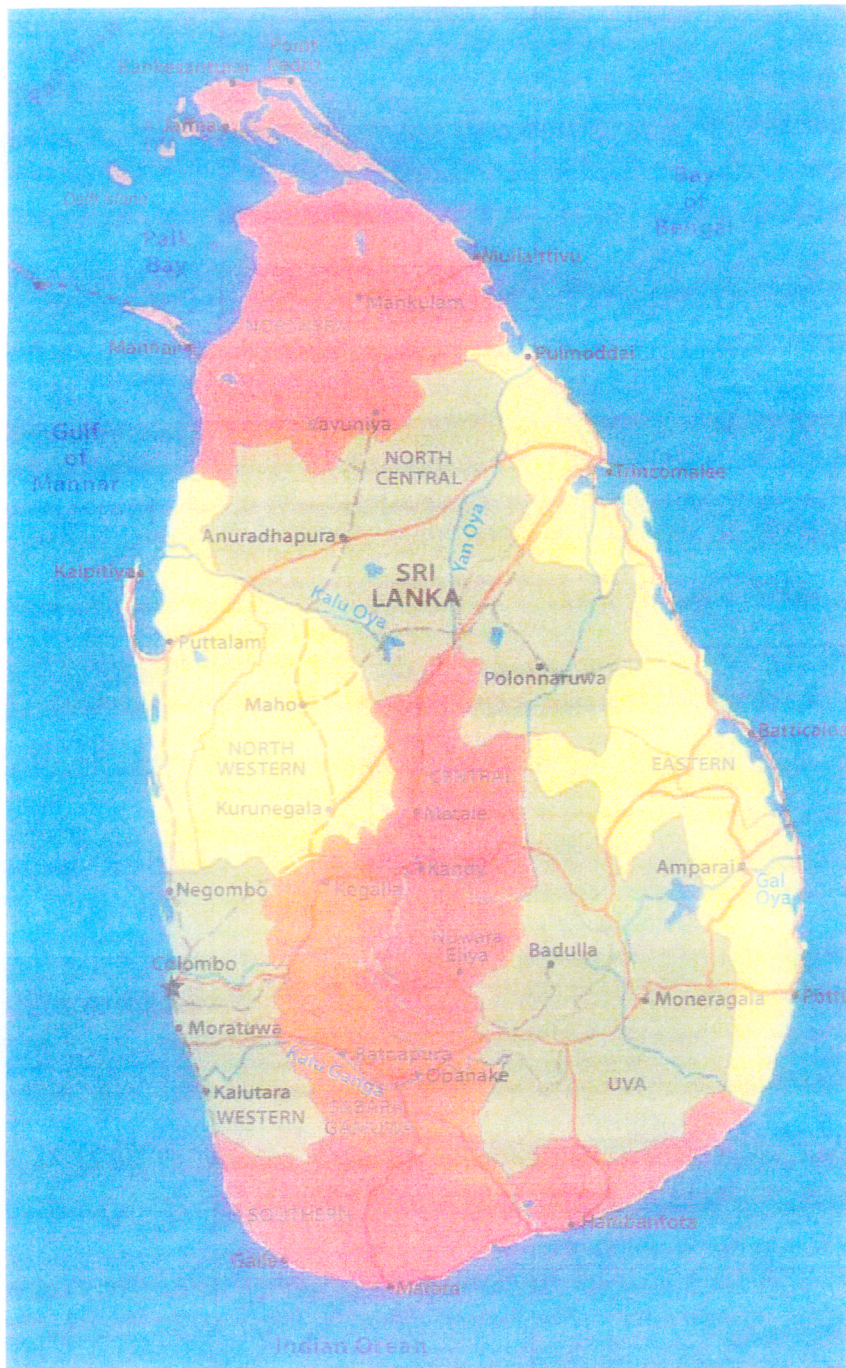
Liberated area

NORTHERN PROVINCE, CURRENT CONFLICT AREA



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